



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Before the Planning and Development Committee**

In support of PSB No. 2, ACC SMART GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Submitted by Chris Cryder
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Connecticut Fund for the Environment works to protect and improve the land, air and water of Connecticut. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring people together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Connecticut Fund for the Environment, and its workgroup Growing Connecticut Around Transit (GCAT), submits this testimony in support of Proposed SB No. 2, An Act Concerning Smart Growth and Job Creation. GCAT is a coalition of developers, business councils and associations, chambers of commerce, regional planning agencies, councils of government, municipalities, and non-profit housing, transportation, and environmental organizations who are working together to move transit-oriented development forward in the state.

The concepts set forth in SB 2 would advance the goals of stimulating the economy while fostering smart growth principles. We believe both goals go hand-in-hand, and that aligning economic development plans with state-wide planning objectives for the environment, transportation and agriculture is an essential strategy.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) supports all of the aforementioned smart growth objectives. TOD communities are mixed-use neighborhoods with good quality public transit that connect people of a variety of incomes to a wide range of economic, social, educational, and recreational opportunities. They incorporate access to human services such as child care facilities, fresh food stores, health care facilities, and cultural and educational institutions within a short walking distance of transit. Families living in transit areas can significantly reduce the time and cost spent on their daily commute to work, and other trips required for their daily chores, allowing for more disposable income and leisure time. Compact and pedestrian-oriented environments also generate demonstrated public health benefits by reducing obesity and preventing related health problems. Furthermore, TODs concentrate development away from greenfields, create opportunities for energy efficiency, increase transit ridership, and reduce vehicle-miles travelled.

With the addition of *CTfastrak* and the New Haven –Hartford – Springfield Rail Project to our existing transit network, Connecticut has an unparalleled one-time opportunity to reshape the way we connect to each other and to the region, create jobs, boost the economy, and wisely develop our communities for the 21st century. We must act swiftly to fully leverage the federal and state investments in intercity rail and bus rapid transit to generate TOD, and capitalize on our greatest asset – hundreds of acres of developable land within walking distance of our transit stations.

With limited resources and nearly fifty transit stations with existing or pending service, the state must strategically identify priorities for partnership and investment with municipalities and the private development sector to ensure that short-term growth, economic stimulus and job creation are achieved.

Over the past year, the Growing Connecticut Around Transit workgroup has developed two key recommendations for assisting TOD growth:

- Identify and prioritize Transit Communities to be supported, and;
- Prioritize and direct existing (and eventually new) state resources toward legitimate, well-planned TOD projects in selected Transit Communities

The state has taken strong initial steps to move forward with transit-oriented development. In 2011, the state awarded \$5 million in transit-oriented development planning grants to 11 municipalities. These grants will fund much-needed analysis and planning for transit-oriented development around the municipalities' transit stations. Recent brownfield remediation awards gave priority to certain TOD projects. Key agencies have combined resources and have been initiating pilot programs to identify needs of communities poised to benefit from TOD and direct the state's resources accordingly. Moreover, in December 2012, Governor Malloy announced the creation of an interagency workgroup to address the transit-oriented development needs of the state. This new workgroup will be tasked with strategically planning for transit-oriented development while in a tight fiscal climate.

To be successful, the effort must be done in close coordination with towns, businesses, housing providers, state agencies and, of course, the legislature. We are happy to assist in this task.

For your review, I am attaching a TOD case statement prepared by the Regional Plan Association which provides more in depth information about transit-oriented development and ways to plan for it around the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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